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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 003471

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [UNSC](#) [AORC](#) [SU](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: U.S.-FRENCH CONSULTATIONS ON UN ISSUES: UN REFORM,
SYG SUCCESSION, UNSC ELECTIONS, DARFUR, COTE D'IVOIRE

REF: PARIS 3432

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner, reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: IO PDAS Jim Warlick's May 19 meeting with MFA IO A/S-equivalent Sylvie Bermann focused primarily on UN reform issues -- namely the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Human Rights Council (HRC), and management reform -- with SYG elections, Darfur, Cote d'Ivoire, and UNSC elections discussed in less detail. (Reftel reports on Iran-related discussion.) There was general agreement on potential scope for the PBC and the need for the U.S. and France to work together in the HRC, with both sides welcoming the defeat of Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela in recent HRC elections. On management reform, the French side echoed U.S. criticism of the lack of effectiveness of the UNGA Fifth Committee, but urged working towards a "package deal" with the G-77 to avoid a UN budgetary crisis in June. Bermann also questioned U.S. proposals to enhance the UN military staff committee, which she viewed as too P-5 focused. On UNSYG succession, Bermann expressed disdain for the current crop of declared candidates and agreed that political stature and management capability, not regional background, are the most important criteria. On AF issues, the French side welcomed adoption of UNSCR 1679, briefed Warlick on recent GoF meetings with UN officials in Darfur, and commended USG-GOF coordination on increasing UNOCI troop numbers by reducing UNMEE. Bermann sought an update on the UNSC election race between Guatemala and Venezuela, but did not respond substantively to Warlick's appeal for French help in rallying African support for Guatemala. End summary.

UN REFORM: PBC, HRC, MANAGEMENT REFORM

¶2. (C) Bermann stressed the need to avoid being overly ambitious in deciding the scope of the PBC, noting that establishment of the PBC had been delayed too long by wrangling over participation. In the GoF view, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti were too complicated for the PBC; Burundi was a more appropriate choice. Warlick concurred on the importance of the PBC and stressed the need for it to be funded from existing resources and have early successes. He agreed that Burundi was a good choice, adding also Liberia, Sierra Leone, and East Timor as possible countries of focus for the PBC. Both sides concluded that there was general USG-GOF agreement on the issue.

¶3. (C) Bermann reaffirmed GoF readiness to work with the U.S.

in the HRC, and welcomed Warlick's confirmation of U.S. intent to be an "active observer." Bermann concurred with Warlick that the recent defeats of Sudan, Iran and Venezuela in HRC elections were welcome developments, though she added that the GoF was "not totally satisfied" with the overall results. Bermann stressed the importance of "peer reviews" in the upcoming HRC as a means of obliging HRC members to address human rights issues, and concluded that the upcoming June HRC session should not deal with technical issues only. She confirmed the likely attendance of French FM Douste-Blazy at the June HRC opening session, and expressed hope that the U.S. would participate as a full member in next year's HRC. Warlick confirmed U.S. intent to send an appropriate-level Washington-based official to the HRC opening and stressed the need for the Council to have "early successes." Warlick was clear that the HRC must not be allowed to become a political vehicle to bash Israel.

14. (C) On management reform, Bermann urged working towards a "package deal" with the G-77 which would head off a UN budget crisis in June. She concurred that the G-77 was posing serious obstacles and echoed U.S. criticism of the lack of effectiveness of the UNGA Fifth Committee. At the same time, she advocated focusing on areas where reforms were possible, noting that this was not the case with respect to Fifth Committee governance, for example. Bermann referred to a French non-paper circulated in New York, and affirmed GOF eagerness to work with the U.S. and other Europeans towards a rapid solution. Warlick, for his part, stressed U.S. readiness to engage and find common ground, while emphasizing the need for concrete results by June in three critical areas: transparency/accountability, Secretariat reform, and mandate reviews.

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15. (C) Warlick stressed the need to break through the G-77 dynamic of voting as a bloc, and cautioned against the potential negative repercussions of a possible G-77 effort to lift the spending cap by returning to voting in the Fifth Committee. Bermann stressed the need for continued dialogue with key G-77 players, and noted a GoF meeting with the Indonesian Vice-Minister, who had expressed misgivings about the G-77 position. MFA PDAS-equivalent for IO/UN Affairs Jean-Pierre Lacroix suggested considering ways to include key G-77 players likely to be future major contributors to the UN budget -- such as India, Brazil, and Mexico -- in management reform discussions, without formally enlarging the Geneva Group. Warlick questioned the effectiveness of such a larger Geneva Group and said Washington would want to consider such a proposal very carefully.

16. (C) Bermann briefly raised concerns on U.S. proposals to enhance the long dormant UNSC military staff committee, which she viewed as too P-5 focused. Bermann expressed concern that a P-5 exclusive approach would give Russia and China opportunity to block progress, and suggested a more informal, expansive consultative group which would include all UNSC members as well as major troop contributors. Such a group, in Bermann's view, could advise the UNSC on military matters and maintain informal dialogue with the UN Secretariat. Warlick explained the U.S. proposal's P-5 focus as reflecting the fact that the P-5 represents the "heart and soul" of the UNSC. A P-5 focused military staff committee, in the U.S. view, would also give Russia and China an opportunity to engage constructively on such issues. Bermann agreed with Warlick that there was a need for better military advice to the UNSC, and both sides suggested that the issue should be discussed further in New York.

NEXT UNSYG: AGREEMENT ON CRITERIA, DEARTH OF CANDIDATES

17. (C) Bermann expressed concern about the dearth of well-qualified, declared candidates to replace SYG Annan, and was particularly dismissive of the candidacies of Thai Deputy

Prime Minister Surakiart Sathirathai and former U/SYG for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala. Bermann agreed with Warlick that we should seek the best possible SYG candidate, irrespective of geographic background. She stressed that international political stature was more important for the GoF than management capability, but agreed that both criteria trumped regional background. Bermann demurred when asked by Warlick if she saw any well-qualified, undeclared candidates on the horizon. She downplayed prospects for a successful East European candidate, noting categorical Russian opposition to candidates from Poland and Latvia, and doubted that the GoF could support UNSYG adviser Shashi Tharoor, whom she dismissed as a "UN bureaucrat." She observed that Kemal Dervish of Turkey could be a good candidate, though she did not know his chances and wondered whether he could gain Asia Group support.

DARFUR VISIT: UN SEEKING LARGE, AMBITIOUS OPERATION

18. (C) Bermann commended the recent UNSC adoption of UNSCR 1679, noting that the GoF had always favored a UN takeover of the African Union mission in Darfur (AMIS). She conceded that the GoF position had been initially misunderstood, clarifying that France had posed questions about the takeover only because it would become the UN's biggest operation, not because the GoF opposed the move. MFA PDAS-equivalent for IO/UN affairs Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Warlick on his visit to Darfur over the May 13-14 weekend, during which he met with a wide range of people in Darfur and Khartoum, including representatives of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). Lacroix noted that UNMIS representatives remained wary of the intentions of the Khartoum government after signature of the Darfur Peace Agreement, and told him that the Sudanese government was most dangerous "when it said yes." Lacroix concluded, based on his discussions with UNMIS, that the UN was looking at a very broad, ambitious mandate in Darfur, taking on all major elements of implementing the peace accord. He described the UN as looking at numbers as high as 30,000 -- to include civilian officials, military, and police -- an operation which would pose huge logistical challenges, incomparable to any other operation in UN history. Lacroix

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observed that there was no infrastructure in Darfur, so everything necessary for the UN operation, from water to buildings, would have to be brought in.

19. (C) Lacroix expressed concern about the time lag between signature of the Darfur Peace Accord and the UN takeover of security responsibilities, during which parties could seek to increase attacks. He noted that humanitarian agencies on the ground in Darfur were most concerned about the security situation, prospects for increased IDP's, potential hurdles posed by the Khartoum government, and donor fatigue, which was beginning to be felt on the ground. At the same time, Lacroix noted some encouraging progress, and said he was surprised to learn that the infant mortality rate in Darfur is the lowest in Africa, due to the massive humanitarian effort underway. Lacroix also described the food supply situation as "not so worrying" for the medium term, with the increased U.S. contribution to the World Food Program efforts in Darfur likely to alleviate recent shortfalls.

110. (C) Lacroix confirmed that French UN Permrep De la Sabliere planned to join the UNSC permreps mission to Darfur in June, and that he would also lead the delegation's visit to Chad. Lacroix reported that the GoF had urged UNMIS to do more to ensure that instability in Darfur did not spread to Chad. In response, UNMIS had told him that it was reluctant to take on a Chad border monitoring mission, because of excessive personnel requirements and concerns about possible negative impact on the Darfur Peace Agreement.

COTE D'IVOIRE

¶11. (C) In brief comments on Cote d'Ivoire, Bermann commended ongoing U.S-French discussions to increase UNOCI levels while decreasing UNMEE as a good outcome. She expressed hope that the UN could begin the force generation process for UNOCI soon, stressing the importance of the issue to the GoF. She added that greater stability in western Cote d'Ivoire would have a positive impact in Liberia.

UNSC ELECTIONS: VENEZUELA VS GUATEMALA

¶12. (C) Bermann sought an update on the UNSC election race between Venezuela and Guatemala, asking whether Venezuela's defeat in HRC elections would bode well for Guatemala. She betted that Guatemala's recognition of Taiwan would likely cost it China's crucial support. Warlick observed that the trend line was moving in a positive direction, with Guatemala campaigning more actively, especially in Africa, though CARICOM's endorsement of Venezuela had been a setback. Warlick cautioned against over-confidence on a Guatemala victory, and stressed the disastrous impact Venezuela would have within the UNSC. He encouraged the GoF to do more to support Guatemala, including efforts to build support for Guatemala in West Africa. Warlick described Africa as the key to a successful Guatemalan candidacy, with the GRULAC divided and the WEOG supporting Guatemala already. Bermann offered no substantive response to Warlick's appeal for France to consider ways to advance discreetly Guatemala's UNSC campaign in Africa, but she agreed to stay in touch on the issue and concurred on the downsides of a Venezuelan victory.

¶13. (U) PDAS Warlick cleared this message.

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